Prayers for Utah Mall Victims

SALT LAKE CITY (CNS) — Magr. J. Terrence Fitzgerald, administrator of the Diocese of Salt Lake City, called on Catholics to unite in prayer for victims of a shooting spree at a shopping mall and their families and for the gunman and his family.

Five people were killed and at least four more were wounded in a shooting spree at Trolley Square in Salt Lake City on Feb. 12. The gunman was fatally shot by police. Authorities were trying to figure out what sparked the rampage.

“We pray for everyone who has been traumatized by this violent event, including the police officers involved, the rescue workers, Trolley Square employees, and all of those people who were in the mall at the time of the shootings,” said Magr. Fitzgerald.

Jamaica Pastor Is Placed on Leave

Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio has placed a Queens pastor on administrative leave from active parish ministry after accepting the Diocesan Review Board’s finding that an allegation of inappropriate behavior by a young man more than two decades ago was credible.

The bishop announced his decision on the status of Father Robert J. McConinney in a letter read to parishioners of St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church, where he had served as pastor since 1997.

As a priest on administrative leave, Father McConinney may not present himself as a priest, celebrate Mass publicly or administer the sacraments, the letter said. He is permitted to offer Mass privately.

Bishop DiMarzio said the diocese will submit documentation to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the Vatican “for its own review and any direction it may wish to provide to our Diocese as to any further action it wishes to take.”

In his letter, the bishop apologized to the victim “on behalf of the church and in particular of the Diocese of Brooklyn, for the emotional suffering he has endured over these many years.” He said “even the passage of time” has not caused him to forget “a difficult experience encountered at an early stage in his life.”

The bishop asked the parishioners of St. Nicholas of Tolentine to pray for the person who came forward with the allegations against Father McConinney and to remember “the good work he (Father McConinney) has performed in more than 33 years of his priesthood.”

The allegation did not come from someone who had any association with the parish.

The diocese toll-free line established by the diocese in 2004 received the report of the allegation, which was presented to the Diocesan Review Board, a panel of eight laypersons experienced in social services, family life, medicine, the law and law enforcement. The bishop described them as persons of “outstanding integrity and good judgment” who are “generous in their commitment to serving the Church on these difficult matters.”

After an investigation, the review board prepared a report that concluded that the allegation was credible and presented the findings to the bishop for his consideration. The bishop studied the report and reached the decision on which he announced in his letter to the parishioners.

Bishop DiMarzio said the Kings District Attorney’s Office was notified when the diocese received the report of the allegation.

Healing Team

Ten members of the Diocesan Healing Intervention Team were available following the Masses to speak with parishioners who wished to comment on the information they heard. Sister Ellen Patricia Finn, O.P., the diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator, said the reactions were “shock and surprise.”

Bishop DiMarzio’s letter invited “anyone who as a minor was the victim of improper behavior by a member of the clergy to report the information to the diocesan toll-free reporting line: (888) 634-4499.

As in the case presented here,” the letter said, “a caller will be welcomed, encouraged and respected.”

“Stating that this continues to be a challenging time for our Church,” Bishop DiMarzio said he was praying for the people of St. Nicholas of Tolentine “as you receive this disturbing information.”

Bishop DiMarzio’s Calendar

Sunday-Tuesday, Feb. 18-20 Curial Retreat, Immaculate Conception Seminary, Huntington

Wednesday, Feb. 21 - 12:30 p.m. Mass and distribution of ashes, James Cardinal Basilic Brooklyn.

Thursday, Feb. 22 - 10 a.m. S. York State Catholic Conference Fall Policy Committee meeting, Albany

Friday-Sunday, Feb. 23-25 Vocation and Discernment Retreat, Immaculate Conception Convent, Douglaston.

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